

CRITICAL NOTICE

Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*

An Introduction

Cambridge Introductions to KEY PHILOSOPHICAL TEXTS

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Despite the fact that new commentaries and selections of essays concerning the many different aspects of Wittgenstein's philosophy appear almost every month, the actual proportion of these now devoted exclusively to introducing the *Philosophical Investigations* has tended to diminish into the new millennium. In this regard, the *Tractatus* has probably fared rather better, so that if we are prepared to treat separately works like Severin Schroeder's *Wittgenstein The Way Out of the Fly-Bottle* from Polity in 2006, with its wide-ranging coverage of the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations*, it becomes relatively easy to find, for example, Alfred Nordmann's companion piece to the *Tractatus* in the same series as David Stern's book from Cambridge in 2005, Maria Cerezo's *The Possibility of Language: Internal Tensions in Wittgenstein's Tractatus* from Stanford in 2005, Roger White's welcome *Reader's Guide to the Tractatus* from Continuum in 2006, and Michael Morris's *Guidebook to Wittgenstein and the Tractatus* from Routledge in 2008.

Also from Routledge and in the same series is the book which, originally published in 1997, and due for a 2nd edition in 2010, probably bears the closest comparison to David Stern's in recent years, Marie McGinn's deservedly popular, and almost annually reprinted *Wittgenstein and The Philosophical Investigations*. Although other books devoted to the *Investigations* have appeared, notably William Brenner's *Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations* from SUNY in 1999, McGinn's is worth comparing to Stern's in just those respects where a particularly noticeable difference in approach and interpretation can occasionally be detected. In fact, David Stern reviewed Marie McGinn's book (*Mind*, 2002, 147), and whilst regarding it as one of the best introductions to the later Wittgenstein, his treatment is remarkably perfunctory with its failure - perhaps excusable for reasons of space - to engage with the content of the book in any real detail, preferring instead to

point towards several historical inaccuracies in McGinn's account of the relationship between, for example, the composition of the *Investigations* and the *Blue Book*, the *Brown Book* and *Zettel*. In this respect, his review was probably an opportunity missed. Certainly, Stern's detailed studies of the *Nachlass* over many years, providing him with an exceptional knowledge of the intermediate period from 1929 - manifested in his *Wittgenstein on Mind and Language* from Oxford in 1997 - makes him, as one of the pre-eminent scholars in his field, ideally suited to offer this unique appraisal of the development of Wittgenstein's ideas. This is an important subject in its own right which contributes to our overall understanding of Wittgenstein, albeit that it is not usually of much concern to those philosophers whose main aim is to extoll the value of his mature reflections for contemporary philosophy, or perhaps more appropriately for its demise.

It is also worth pointing out that whilst the kinds of popular books provided by Stern and McGinn are branded by their publishers as ideal introductions to students, sometimes students in a particular year of study, or as elementary accounts of Wittgenstein's later philosophy, even suitable in the case of the Cambridge series for readers with no previous background in philosophy (cover blurb), the truth of course is that there is no such thing as an elementary introduction to Wittgenstein's philosophy, because this is a field in which, as Stern emphasises, there is no settled unanimity amongst philosophers on the interpretation of even the most basic features of his thought. Consequently, a book in this field intended for the most general readership may prove to have more important things to say about Wittgenstein than many a detailed scholarly study of the *Nachlass*. It almost also goes without saying that for someone deeply engaged in philosophy, it is well nigh impossible to grasp the situation of a reader 'having no previous background' in the subject whatsoever. A meeting of minds at some level or other must always be presupposed.

Stern in his Introduction presents a number of ideas some of which will assume more importance later in his book. He accepts to begin with that we should think of the *Philosophical Investigations* as comprising what we now know as Part I only, the final version of the book that occupied Wittgenstein during the second half of his career, Part II being very much an artificial

creation resulting from an editorial decision by his literary Trustees, yet comprising material which, had he had time, he might very well have incorporated within Part I. This, of course, need not be considered to be a bar to any commentator who wishes for his own purposes to point towards some of the most brilliant passages that Part II contains. Stern also rightly claims that the most influential reading of the *Investigations* to have occupied philosophers since the 1980's has in fact been Saul Kripke's *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language* - which Marie McGinn equally regards as being 'inspired' if ultimately misguided (McGinn, 74) - a work providing a reading, Stern is careful to emphasise, already foreshadowed in Peter Winch's *The Idea of a Social Science and its Relation to Philosophy* (1958, 1990), and in Robert Fogelin's *Wittgenstein* (1976, 1987). Consequently, one of Stern's central themes will prove to be the role of rule-following scepticism within the *Investigations*, even if that reading, and the subsequent ever-rising mountain of discussion in which it has resulted, has tended to take place at some considerable remove from Wittgenstein's original texts.

Indeed, the importance of the original texts is central to Stern's methodology, for it is precisely the common failure to appreciate the Socratic character of the dialogues in the *Investigations* that leads many commentators to regard their principal task as that of extracting "'Wittgenstein's'" trains of argument and his solutions to familiar philosophical problems from his unusual way of writing, and present them in an accessible and clear-cut way' (*Ibid.*, 4). Interpreters who begin with this approach are almost inevitably going to foster a rigid dichotomy between their perception of his actual argumentative practice and his clearly methodological remarks about the disease-ridden character of the entire philosophical enterprise ; and to avoid attributing this very common inconsistency to Wittgenstein, Stern sensibly argues that a distinction ought to be drawn between Wittgenstein's narrator, calling for positive philosophical theses, and his commentator, dissolving philosophical problems in the course of leading the reader therapeutically out of the philosophical maze: 'One aim of this book is to do justice to both sides of the *Philosophical Investigations*, and so help the reader see how its argumentative aspect and its therapeutic aspect are actually

complementary and interwoven.' (*Ibid.*, 5)

It is therefore a central feature of Stern's ensuing treatment that what he refers to as the multiplicity of voices and perspectives that the *Investigations* contains, voices and perspectives none of which can be identified individually as unproblematically that of the author, ought to be the starting-point for our understanding of Wittgenstein's intentions (*Ibid.*, 22). For Stern there is, say, on any occasion the voice of the narrator, the voice of the interlocutor, and yet a third voice which provides an ironic commentary on the debate going on between the others, a voice presenting platitudes about language and everyday life that the other parties may have overlooked (*Ibid.*, 22). Not only are philosophers who identify Wittgenstein's views with those expressed by more than one of these voices inevitably perplexed by the apparent inconsistency which results, but it becomes hardly surprising on this reading that the particular attraction that the *Investigations* has had for philosophers of many different persuasions, results from their each finding their chosen position reflected *via* one of the various voices which Wittgenstein may intend (ironically) to perform exactly the function that these readers almost inevitably cannot avoid attributing to them, *viz.*, that of reflecting 'my Wittgenstein' through one of the participants in the multi-layered discussion. (*Ibid.*, 7) Yet that is not ultimately what the *Investigations* is about, and Stern has no intention either of replacing clear-cut doctrinal readings 'by endless shades of grey or a kaleidoscopic hall of mirrors' (*Ibid.*, 23). Instead of making the mistake of identifying Wittgenstein's 'position' with that presented in the arguments of one of the characters in a dialogue, the reader should adopt a wider perspective:

Wittgenstein, I contend, provided neither a straight solution nor a sceptical solution to the philosophical problems discussed in the *Philosophical Investigations*. Rather, he aimed to dissolve these problems by means of a dialogue between opposing voices, a dialogue in which the commentator comes closer to expressing the author's viewpoint than either of his leading protagonists do. (*Ibid.*, 23).

Stern's approach has undoubtedly a great deal of explanatory power, and his wish to

explain why the *Investigations* has given rise to so many competing interpretations rather than merely to once again provide yet another addition to them is surely laudable. This helps to explain why the first 70 pages of what is not a particularly long book is absorbed by matters of method, the method of both the interpreter and of Wittgenstein himself, before commencing discussion about Augustine in § 1 of the *Investigations*. (Marie McGinn, by contrast, spends 30 pages only at the beginning of her book devoted to method in §§ 89 -133.) This has the result of reducing the actual volume of the *Investigations* which Stern is able within his available space to discuss: the book ends with §§ 243 - 268, a chapter covering similar ground to that in section 6.3 of Chapter 6 on Private Language in his earlier book.

Stern's intention to see the *Philosophical Investigations* 'in the right light' - as a continuous and open-ended discussion amongst opposing voices - is reflected in his adoption of Robert Fogelin's useful distinction between Pyrrhonian readings of the book which capture its sceptical outlook on the value of philosophy itself, and anti-Pyrrhonian readings which see it as a way of overthrowing erroneous theories in order to provide a proper solution to traditional philosophical problems (*Ibid.*, 34 et seqq.) Adopting Goldfarb's political comparison with the French Revolution, introduced to help explain differences between *resolute* and *irresolute* readings of the *Tractatus*, he refers to card-carrying Pyrrhonians as the Jacobins, who are presented as Maoists permanently opposed to any form of political stability, to be distinguished from the anti-Pyrrhonian Girondins, who want to replace the *ancien regime* with a new constitution embodying revolutionary principles. Identifying philosophers like von Savigny, Hintikka & Hintikka, Pears and Baker & Hacker as anti-Pyrrhonian, and Diamond, Conant and late Baker as Pyrrhonian, Stern characteristically looks for the middle-ground in *Tractatus* interpretation between what he refers to as the self-destructive anti-philosophy of philosophers like Diamond, and the more traditional metaphysical readings previously propounded by almost everyone including Peter Hacker. Drawing attention to the historical fact that Wittgenstein always talked about doctrine when he referred to the *Tractatus* in conversation, and when criticising his own earlier views (*Ibid.*, 47), Stern emphasises in regard

to both the *Tractatus* and the *Philosophical Investigations* that each side in the dispute between the relevant factions has misunderstood the significance of an unresolved tension in the works themselves, misreading the opposing voices in Wittgenstein's dialogue by wrongly identifying their chosen position with that of the author (*Ibid.*, 37).

Once again, Stern presents a strong case for the notion that there is a tension of this kind inherent in both works, albeit that it is expressed differently in each. The position is far from being so strong, however, for the relevance of the Nestroy motto to the *Philosophical Investigations*, a subject to which Stern devotes his Chapter 3, and a motto which he eventually translates as 'Anyway, the thing about progress is that it looks much greater than it really is', in an attempt to capture the offhand, conversational tone of the original as closely as possible. This motto has really played no role in most philosophers' understanding of the beginning of the *Investigations*, given that it was not even included in printed versions of the book until 2001, and in the final analysis the fairly obvious conclusion that it can be read either as expressing Wittgenstein's pessimism about the modern world, or about the real significance of his work for the problems about life that really concerned him, may seem to sum up its importance. Stern, however, suggests that this very ambiguity might have appealed to Wittgenstein, and that there is a connection between the Nestroy quotation and the quotation from Augustine, that the former acts as a warning that what follows cannot be taken at face-value, that the progress Wittgenstein makes in responding to Augustine, for example, may not be as great as we might think, and that the very ambiguity of the motto results from its having to be supplied with an interpretation outwith its original context.

Whilst we may be willing to leave open the point about Wittgenstein's progress in relation to Augustine, the reference to taking the motto out of context is highly relevant to an extremely important claim Stern makes early on about a connection between the opening of the *Investigations* and the rule-following considerations, for he argues that commentators rarely acknowledge that these considerations are not merely foreshadowed by, but are actually the culmination of

what he refers to as an argument beginning with the opening of the book:

A key paradox that occurs over and over again, in one form or another, through the first two hundred sections of the *Philosophical Investigations* is that nothing is intrinsically meaningful, for all determination of meaning, by such means as definitions, rules, thought, or images, is dependent on interpretation. Giving any candidate meaning-determiner, it is always, in principle, open to a further, deviant, interpretation. No act of defining or intending, grasping a rule or deciding to go on in a certain way, can give the supposed meaning-determiner the power to determine our future actions, because there is always the question of how it is to be interpreted. Only if we ignore the context can we think that some isolated act can have a determinate meaning regardless of its context (*Ibid.*, 20).

Or, to put the point differently, when doing philosophy the temptation in Wittgenstein's eyes is always to misleadingly locate the determinants of meaning in the accompaniments to our practices, rather than in the practices themselves, for our major philosophical problems arise from becoming captive to the *pictures* in which we take our understanding of the practices to consist, whether this be the practice of attributing sensations to others - 'he surely *must* have the *same* as I have when I am in pain' (§ 300) - or the practice of following a rule 'the *whole* use of which it seems we can grasp *in a flash*' (§ 191). Putting it in this way is perhaps preferable, for if we fail to do so we may be tempted to take the following passage to express the options available to *Wiggenstein* himself rather than to two of the participants in his dialogue:

If we take Wittgenstein's narrator to be a behaviourist, or an ordinary language philosopher who maintains that the rules of our language guarantee that we are mostly right, then the sceptical paradoxes - namely that ostension, explanation and rule-following can always be undermined by sceptical possibilities - receive what Kripke calls a 'straight' solution:

we really can provide a positive answer to the paradoxes, because the expressions in question can be defined in terms of public behaviour, or the rules of grammar that govern our use of language. If, on the other hand we follow Kripke in taking Wittgenstein to be a sceptic who endorses the paradoxes he has formulated, then the appeal to what the community ordinarily does in its use of these terms is only a negative answer to the sceptical problem (Kripke calls this a 'sceptical' solution): recognising that we cannot solve the problem, we instead appeal to what we ordinarily do as a way of indicating the best reply available, albeit one that does not really solve the paradoxes. (*Ibid.* 21)

This is presented almost as if it were a debate between Baker & Hacker and Kripke, whereas of course we can only believe that the paradox could have *either* a 'straight' or a 'sceptical' solution if we are already party to the *picture* in which it seems that 'in the course of our argument we give one interpretation after another; as if each one contented us at least for a moment, until we thought of yet another standing behind it.' (§ 201) But this is *already* to be taking the rule out of the context in which it is in practice exhibited in 'what we call "obeying the rule" and "going against it" in actual cases.' In Stern's presentation here, we have to think of Wittgenstein as playing the role, say, of his 'third voice', the ironic commentator who reveals that neither party to the dispute has succeeded in extricating himself from the misleading *pictures* which lie at the heart of what, when doing philosophy, we perceive to constitute a paradox from which we require to be extricated. In *this* respect, these paradoxes can have *neither* of the kinds of 'solution' presented by Stern's 'voices', and remain, at the level at which they arise, 'unanswerable'. The argumentative strategies most commentators manage to discover in these passages have therefore, as Stern argues, to be carefully assessed if we are not to oversimplistically identify either of them with a viewpoint that is Wittgenstein's own.

Here it is perhaps worth reminding ourselves that the very notion that there are

these many different 'voices' in the *Investigations* is itself nothing but a *façon de parler*, and that the commentator, the interlocutor and the narrator are artificial creations superimposed upon the texts. The fact of the matter is simply that Wittgenstein could not avoid seeing the argument from every conceivable point of view, so that this interpretative edifice, as Stern is only too aware (*Ibid.*, 75) is valuable only to the extent that it serves to illuminate our understanding of the texts. We ought not to be over concerned, therefore, if these 'voices' are not always as clear-cut as Stern may sometimes appear to suggest, given that they are constantly fading in and out of each other in a way which properly reflects the multi-layered and multi-varying texture of the *Investigations*.

Yet Stern's opposing 'voices' do often succeed in being highly illuminating, as is his description of the three-stage argumentative strategy Wittgenstein is said to employ not only in § 2 but often in his introduction of new topics throughout the book. Stern presents the *first stage* as a brief description of a philosophical position opposed by Wittgenstein, *e.g.*, the conception of meaning he discerns in Augustine's description of how he learned to speak. The *second stage* involves the description of a quite specific set of circumstances in which this conception of meaning as 'the object for which the word stands' is appropriate, leading, *e.g.*, to the story about the builders. The *third stage* follows in which it is revealed that these circumstances are so limited that once we move beyond them, the scenario is entirely inappropriate for it to contribute to our understanding of the function of language in general. For Stern, this strategy is often fully explicit, and in other cases the reader is left to draw the moral, *viz.*, that philosophical problems are not to be solved but dissolved. (*Ibid.*, 11).

Wittgenstein is also said to frequently use a complementary method, that of bringing attention to bear on the 'best case scenarios', like that of the builders introduced in stage 2, in order to show that the examples unravel when one approaches too close to them, for we are initially lulled into taking it for granted that the shopkeeper and builder examples make perfect sense, *e.g.*, that the builders' instructions *can* be conceived as a complete primitive language (§ 2) or that this *can* be regarded as the *whole* language of a tribe (§ 6), when the very idea that a tribe's activities could be *exhausted* by the routines described in these stories is something that patently

can make very little sense to us (*Ibid.*, 12).

The reason for this is that if a tribe's activities *were* so limited, then these creatures, as Stern suggests, would simply not have a life in any way like our own. We really would have to think of the limitations of their language as a reflection of limitations in their levels of awareness. They then turn into Stanley Cavell's sluggish and vacant builders, eternally performing *only* these mechanical procedures, accompanied perhaps by obligatory grunts as part of this stultifying routine (1). Yet we can equally see Wittgenstein's saying that for this particular *purpose* we are free to regard this language as self-contained, as something taken out of the context of a normal life in which it would indeed be surrounded by a host of other activities. As he says in *Zettel* § 99, 'the life of these men must be like ours in many respects, and I said nothing about this similarity'. His main concern is that their language, and their thinking too may be rudimentary, that primitive thinking is *expressed* in their primitive behaviour, just as it is *expressed* in the speech which accompanies their activities. The 'thinking' is not something 'going on in their minds' that *accompanies* our descriptions of their behaviour.

Stanley Cavell similarly explores a wider context of a more ordinary kind for his builders (*Ibid.*), one in which their clipped expressions bear comparison with the old medical movie fascination in the operating theatre with 'scalpel!' 'suture!' 'wipe!' ; and it is similarly true of any activity in which people hurriedly engage in a routine, that they evolve a language suitable to their needs: think of the fast-talking staff shouting orders to the kitchen in a busy diner, or the auctioneer speaking in a manner apparently so quick that it seems incomprehensible to the uninitiated, yet engineered to increase bids and preserve an even flow to the proceedings. The question is what *relevance* we are to grant to these varying interpretations that we certainly can give to the builders' and, indeed, to the shopkeeper's tale, interpretations that at one extreme take the story of the shopkeeper entirely at face-value, as in Marie McGinn's claim that 'what is in question is how the shopkeeper operates with these words, how he *acts*, rather than any correlation between these words and an object' (McGinn, 40). Yet at the opposite extreme, we

are invited by Rupert Read and Phil Hutchinson (2) to regard the text under consideration as 'self-deconstructing' in the very act of its being read, as providing something so 'mad' or 'alien' to us that we end by realising that we do not even know what is being imagined in the stories Wittgenstein is presenting for our consideration.

Yet if we actually study what McGinn says about Wittgenstein's presentation of the builders example (*Ibid.*, 41), and how she introduces the distinction between *ostensive definition* - requiring *prior* knowledge of what it is to attach a name to an item - and *ostensive teaching* by which the child is introduced into the process of gradually becoming acquainted with the naming procedure, her account is perfectly alright in emphasising that the Augustinian model presents the child as someone conceptually articulate prior to his being able to talk, that he can 'think only not yet speak', the very *picture* at the heart of the entire way of looking at things that Wittgenstein is putting in question. On the other hand, Stern may appear to have a strong case for following a line of thinking about the shopkeeper originally introduced by Stephen Mulhall (3):

But is it really unimportant that grocers never do identify apples on a chart, or the colour red by means of a sample? On closer examination, the story of § Id seems better suited to a Beckett play, or the theatre of the absurd. Wittgenstein's story is surreal precisely because it concerns ordinary skills that are taken for granted by any competent speaker, let alone a shopkeeper, and because it describes a quite extraordinary set of procedures for exercising these skills.....However, these strangely wooden proceduresserve as a behavioural pantomime, an acting out on the public stage of just those mental processes that philosophers have often thought must underlie our public performance. (Stern, *Ibid.* 85).

Consequently, Stern's robotic shopkeeper, portrayed as correlating number words with imagined counting procedures, and the word 'red' with a mental image of the colour red, a person

whose world is one of mechanical and lifeless routine, illustrates procedures which, once brought into the open and revealed for what they are, cannot really be thought to be of any more value if believed to animate the mind by providing our words with meaning. Mental mechanisms are exorcised by bringing them into the open as public performances. However, if Mulhall is quick to accuse those philosophers who happily accept this mechanical tale as an example representative of ordinary life, because he sees them as hypocritically participating in the very confusion that Wittgenstein is at pains to uncover, he is equally intent at revealing, in a Cavellian manner, that there are ways of interpreting the behaviour of the shopper that really conform to ordinary life after all: the slip marked 'five red apples' is handed over by a foreigner on holiday who has no command of English; or perhaps by a deaf-mute who finds this an easier way to shop; or the slip of paper is presented by a young child on an errand.

Yet even Mulhall's perceptive account of the mechanical shopkeeper, viewing him as an element in Wittgenstein's criticism of a certain preconceived philosophical *picture*, hardly exhausts the suggestiveness of the example. For this shopkeeper has all the hallmarks of an individual who is just recovering from a stroke, or perhaps he is a soldier just back from the front and suffering from a form of shell-shock, someone undergoing rehabilitation into civilian life: the mechanical procedures in which he indulges are actually part of a strict regime of Wittgensteinian *training* enabling him to reacquaint himself with the arithmetical and linguistic skills that as a result of his medical condition he is only slowly able to recover. Only with time and perseverance will his exercise of these skills again be something which has become second nature to him, when they are eventually manifested in the performance of tasks that he performs with unthinking confidence, and so *blindly* (§ 219).

Stephen Mulhall echoes Stanley Cavell's various interpretations of the builders, viewing them either as grunting, vacant Neanderthals, or as busy individuals involved in a specific routine which has the surroundings of those normal activities which are part and parcel of a human life expressed through a highly complex language (Mulhall, *Ibid.*, 52 *et seq.*).

But he also introduces a third possible interpretation which may help to explain the apparent primitiveness of the builders, one in which Wittgenstein is portrayed as playing the role of a satirical commentator on the modern world, aspects of which he has often been shown to despise. As Mulhall presents his case, 'here the culture as a whole must be thought of as pervaded by debilitating noise and distraction, as a collectivity that is stupefying itself by the poverty of its practices and conceptions, stultifying the human imagination and depriving it of a future' (Mulhall, *Ibid.*, 57).

The fact remains that interpretations of this kind are going to illuminate the text of the *Investigations* only to the extent that individual readers can actively participate imaginatively in this kind of reconstruction, with the consequence that others of a more prosaic cast of mind are inevitably going to see them as far-fetched relative to their perception of what the *Investigations* is really about. This may appear after all to justify Stern's emphasis on returning to the texts, reflected in his claim that those who see the opening of the *Investigations* itself as harbouring an interpretation which already encapsulates an inherent criticism of a vast theoretical edifice entitled *The Augustinian Picture*, are actually reading into the book ideas which have a very slender base in the text. When articulated this 'Big Picture' reading incorporates a number of very well-known ideas, which are summed-up by Hans Johann-Glock as follows in a passage quoted by Stern (*Ibid.*, 78):

[Wittgenstein] treated Augustine's view not as a full-blown theory of language, but as a proto-theoretic paradigm or 'picture' which deserves critical attention because it tacitly underlies sophisticated philosophical theories....The Augustinian picture comprises four positions: a referential conception of word meaning; a descriptivist conception of sentences; the idea that ostensive definition provides the foundations of language; and the idea that a language of thought underlies our public languages. (4)

Yet, as Stern indicates, mentioning Warren Goldfarb, the few lines quoted by Wittgenstein

in which Augustine expresses his understanding of how, in his childhood, he came to grasp what things were called by what names, and how he came to train his mouth to form the signs that he could use to express his own desires, can be understood at a level at which they are simply not intended to incorporate any kind of philosophical proposals at all. They are no more than an expression of a fairly common understanding of what happened when he learned to speak. Yet these very words and their presentation, to those of a *philosophical* bent, can already be seen to reveal a certain ambivalence, so that from *this* perspective they can already be taken to harbour what may at first sight seem only a rather unsophisticated claim: that Augustine in reflecting on his childhood sees himself as having been *already*, and prior to learning a language, an individual human being aware of other individual human beings and of objects of different *kinds* in a common world.

Yet this seemingly unsophisticated expression of a commonplace idea is precisely the notion that Wittgenstein is inherently criticising in its *philosophical* guise. What could it have been anyway for Augustine to describe, on *this* assessment, what it was *really* like for him to learn a language, allowing for the criticism that a 'language of thought' cannot be assumed to underlie our acquisition of a public language, otherwise it would lead only to an infinite regress? The answer is that he would have been forced to say that, as a true philosopher, he could have had *no* conception at all of what it could have been like prior to his acquiring a public language, because prior to that eventuality there is a sense in which he could not have existed, not merely as a conceptually articulate human being, but as a human being in any sense at all.

If this seems perplexing, the reason is simply that when doing *philosophy* it is assumed *either* that Augustine's child *is* conceptually articulate prior to learning a language, *or* that he is not. Yet there is of course a *separate* empirical question concerning the capacities a child brings to the table when he begins to learn a language, the kind of question which, for example, evidently surrounds the feral or wolf-child, for however charmed we might be by the behaviour of the playful wolf-cubs in their lair, the fact remains that their barking, eating of

raw meat and moving around on all fours is not the sort of behaviour we find appropriate - we might even see it as repugnant - for a human infant who is beyond the age at which he would normally be expected to walk and talk. One way of explaining these difficulties is that there is a natural tendency, as adult philosophers who have acquired a public language, to read back into our pre-linguistic childhood the very perception of the world that the acquisition of this language allows us to acquire. (Whether this should itself be regarded as a remark issuing from philosophy or from empirical psychology is a question that may be set aside.) One way out of the difficulties here is to extend our notion of what a *concept* is to animals, allowing that there is, in the final analysis, no sharp dividing line between behaviour which is mechanical, without thought - the behaviour, say of a primitive organism - and the highly sophisticated behaviour of the conceptually articulate human being who has acquired a public language. Between these two extremes will be all kinds of variations on behaviour amongst animals, communicating where appropriate amongst themselves, which can be regarded as expressive on this view of the acquisition of 'concepts' in varying degrees.

In fact, David Stern in his zeal to adhere closely to the text of the *Investigations* may even appear to be unduly parsimonious in his unwillingness to go along with Glock on articulating in any detail the ramifications of the 'Big Picture', given that he does not see any hint even of a 'language of thought' until § 32, where it is certainly more explicit; whereas other philosophers including Marie McGinn (*Ibid.*) and Stephen Mulhall (5) are prepared to articulate this picture in considerable detail. Indeed, not only does McGinn provide a fairly conventional account of the shopkeeper and builders in which there is nothing at all unproblematic about them, but she articulates this 'Big Picture' in finer detail by exploring the ideas she finds elsewhere in Augustine: the fully human private essence of Augustine's child lacking only the capacity to communicate with others, the child's physical world already portrayed as one of *particular* objects onto which the names he will learn will come to unproblematically attach, with the child's understanding conceived in terms of his mind's

making a connection between a sound and the object it signifies. These are all topics she takes Augustine's child to be articulating in the early sections of the book, ideas which she sees Wittgenstein focussing upon in later sections up to § 40 and beyond (McGinn, *Ibid.*, 38). Yet if we closely study Stern's account (*Ibid.*, 96) it equally succeeds in expressing these points only in a different and more down to earth way, claiming, as does McGinn, that ostensive explanation cannot be the foundation for a first language, because it presupposes an understanding of the function of names; whereas it can play a role for someone learning a second language, since this understanding in *this* case will already be in place. This leads back to § 32, and Wittgenstein's claim that Augustine describes the learning of language *as if* he were learning a second language rather than a first, the very point which directs us to the highly controversial idea of what, in would-be scientific contexts, is routinely designated as a 'language of thought'.

With this statement of the 'paradox of ostension', Stern sees § 32 as the culmination of part of what he refers to as his first 'chapter' of the *Investigations*, where the reader is led from 'the initial expression of philosophical intuitions and proto-theories about language to a clear statement of one of the paradoxes that arise if such trains of thought are pursued' (*Ibid.*, 96). This first part of the *Investigations* ends with § 64 and the discussion of names, to be followed by a second group of passages running from §§ 65 - 133. This deals with the notion that understanding a word or sentence involves commitment to definite rules for its use (to § 88), and continues to § 133 with the idea that rules could state the essence of language. These are the passages that are also often understood to contain an expression of Wittgenstein's methodology. §§ 143 - 242 express the paradox of rule-following, §§ 243 - 315 are concerned with sensation and visual experience, §§ 316 - 62 with thinking, §§ 363 - 397 with imagination, and §§ 398 - 427 with the self and consciousness. §§ 428 - 65 mainly discuss intentionality, negation and meaning, and §§ 466 - 500, grounds for belief and language. Meaning and understanding cover §§ 500 - 46, and the topics of §§ 547 - 600 are negation, understanding, expectation and intention. §§ 600 - 693 comprise recognition, the notion of a special atmosphere, willing, intending and meaning. Whilst this

way of splitting the *Investigations* into topics is to some extent rough and ready, especially in its later sections, it forms a useful reminder of how complex the work really is, and why most introductions to it including Stern's and McGinn's barely manage to cover only half of its content.

Stern draws his initial discussion of those sections ending in § 37 to a close by mentioning a number of responses to the paradox of ostension, involving for example the having of particular experiences which help to pinpoint the intended object, only to point out that these experiences are neither necessary nor sufficient to perform the task required, so that they inevitably become no more than harmless *accompaniments* to the practice of picking out what's intended. This is a familiar form of presentation which can be found throughout Wittgenstein's later work when he is given to point to the fact that what, when doing philosophy, is understood to be the important thing, the *picture* that is merely *incidental* to the practice, the picture of the *pain* or of *rules as rails*, say, is taken to be playing a role in our *understanding* of the relevant practice that leads to *philosophical* confusion. This is a *variation* on Stern's three-step argument, which he mentions again at this point, and this leads to the idea expressed in § 38 that philosophical problems arise when language 'idles' or 'goes on holiday'. This is Wittgenstein's answer to the philosopher's indignant protest that a philosophical use of language comprises a distinct and legitimate exercise of language for a special purpose, a valid 'language - game'. Yet this 'legitimate use' is only a consequence of being party to the very *pictures* which are usually directing the course of the discussion.

The important passage (§ 46) in which Wittgenstein identifies both his 'objects' from the *Tractatus* and Russell's 'individuals', with the primary elements mentioned by Socrates in the *Theaetetus*, is followed by the claim in § 47 that outwith a particular context it makes no sense to talk about the absolutely simple parts of a chair. The reason for this is expressed in an answer which is perhaps a little ironic given its association with the redoubtable C. M. Joad : 'that depends on what you understand by "composite" '. It is suggested in § 50 that the philosophical desire to say that simples *must* exist can be partly explained through a misunderstanding of the role of samples which act as paradigms, e.g., *this* is red, or *this* length is one metre. Stern explains

Wittgenstein's claim that the standard metre is neither one metre long nor not one metre long to be a consequence of the idea that 'the standard metre is one metre long', far from being a logical truth, is a statement that has no sense given that this is an attempt to say something outwith the ordinary contexts in which the process of measuring the length of an item by using a standard rod, has any application. We can put this by saying that the standard metre rod cannot be used to measure itself ; although this would not be at all inconsistent with an expert's claim that occasionally the standard metre rod is in fact shorter or longer than it ought to be, if this is a way of saying that from time to time the physical rod that performs the role of the standard metre sometimes fails to satisfy the atmospheric criteria which enter into the definition of what a metre is. Whilst this would have the consequence that it would then make sense to say that today, rather than yesterday - believe it or not - the standard metre really is one metre long, it would still be inappropriate to say that when performing its role as defined - as an instrument used for the purpose of measuring - the standard rod in this particular *role* has any length as an *object* of measurement at all.

Stern's Chapter 6 begins by agreeing with most commentators that § 65 marks an important turning-point in the progress of the *Investigations*, with its bringing to the surface the important question that lies behind all of these considerations, and the one that formerly provided its author with the greatest headache, the nature of the *general form of propositions* and of language. How these sections, and particularly the consideration of games in § 66, are interpreted is central to the distinction Stern wishes to draw between those philosophers who see Wittgenstein in these passages providing a positive non-Pyrrhonian theory concerning a rule-governed language, and those, like himself, who prefer to see Wittgenstein in the act of rejecting the very idea of 'a grammatical reticulation of rules' (*Ibid.*, 115). Quoting Renford Bamburgh in his famous paper 'Universals and Family Resemblances' as an early example of a philosopher who takes Wittgenstein to solve the problem of universals, Stern points out that the traditional theories to which Bamburgh objects, look suspiciously like straw men, and

that Wittgenstein was perfectly well aware that his presentation would make it look as if the discussion has the aim of providing a *better* theory. Yet in the final analysis, his aim is really to draw our attention to the Pyrrhonian idea that the very search for a systematic explanation of meaning in these terms is misguided. Quoting Stanley Cavell's early and much admired paper on 'The Availability of Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy', in which he makes the salient point that the function of ordinary language is in no way impaired because it does not depend on any structure or conception of rules, Stern instances Glock as a philosopher who does think that terms like 'game' can be analytically defined, and Hacker & Baker as thinkers who, whilst they may begin by appearing to echo the platitudinous Pyrrhonian - issuing reminders of what we say when answering requests for explanation - actually straddle a line that barely separates them from the doctrinal non-Pyrrhonian (*Ibid.*, 114).

Yet whilst Stern refers to the *platitudinous* Pyrrhonian, there is really nothing at all platitudinous about pointing to what we say as a means of resolving philosophical problems. The reason for this is that in Wittgenstein's case the platitude - which *can* sometimes be expressed in particular circumstances as an appeal to the paradigm case - is *not* an appeal to what we ordinarily say as a *justification* for adhering to the *philosophical* commitments of what we say in cases where a rival philosopher may argue that these commitments *require* the kind of justification that the 'ordinary language' philosopher neglects. If Wittgenstein is to be regarded as an ordinary language philosopher, then he is not one who could have taken the notion that there *are* paradigm cases in which words are used 'justifiably' to talk about ships and shoes and sealing-wax and cabbages and kings, *independently* of an analysis that shows *why* the demand for a justification rests, more often than not, on the philosopher's being party to the misleading *picture* that is directing the course of his investigation, one giving rise to the very *need* for a 'justification'. It is in this respect that he would have *denied* that the use of ordinary language can have the kinds of *philosophical* commitments underlying, say, the problem of 'other minds'.

This helps to explain why Stern takes exception to a certain kind of interpretation that

is often given to §§ 89 - 133, one in which these passages express Wittgenstein's *metaphilosophy*; and Stern objects to what he sees as the almost universal interpretation of these passages as one in which he is taken to promote his positive non-Pyrrhonian *account* of the autonomy of grammar and the primacy of ordinary language, one which he suggests is shared by Marie McGinn in her book ; although it is almost certain that this is an accusation with which she would disagree (*Ibid.*,124). On this interpretation, which he claims is unjustified because it assumes too much in identifying what Wittgenstein is doing in the 1930-31 manuscripts, the 'Philosophy' Chapter of the Big Typescript and in the *Philosophical Investigations*, ordinary language is a privileged *philosophical* language enabling the good philosopher to provide a 'surveyable representation' of the use of our concepts, in order that he can dispel the mists that descend when, with the bad philosopher, we fail to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use.

At this point Stern makes contact with Gordon Baker's late rejection of the very idea that 'everyday use' can be taken by Wittgenstein to constitute some standard normative practice providing definite rules which the metaphysician breaks at his peril, a view which Baker castigates with his sarcastic reference to this phrase as signifying 'the standard speech patterns of the English-speaking peoples'. Stern's Wittgenstein is not underwriting a book of grammatical rules, so much as summing-up his opposition to specific problems regarding the incoherence internal to particular philosophical strategies (*Ibid.*, 128). Whilst Stern does not spell this out in detail, it is certainly compatible with the claim that so often in philosophy the problems arise from the almost inevitable temptation to *understand* our practices in terms of certain mental processes or *pictures* which, whilst they may accompany our practices, are yet ultimately incidental to them, a point which is equally as relevant to the mental acts Stern discusses which are taken, say, to determine a person's future actions out of context, as it is to the application of the *picture* a philosopher may have of the pain *going on* in someone else in which he may unwittingly take to rest (when doing philosophy) his *understanding* of what it is for that other person to be in pain.

In his penultimate chapter on rule-following, Stern begins by characteristically identifying

three instances in relation to the figure of a cube in § 139 which conform to his three-stage argument scheme, *stage one* where it is suggested, for example, that a picture comes before the mind when a word is understood, *stage two* where it is asked in what sense the picture of a cube coming before one's mind's eye 'fits' the use of the word, to be provided with the answer that this picture does not fit the word if one points, say, to a triangular prism. This is followed by *stage three* issuing the denouement that it is easy to imagine a *form of projection* in which the picture fits after all. This leads ultimately to a familiar conclusion:

Once we acknowledge that it is always possible to imagine a situation in which the words we utter in giving an explanation can be misunderstood, it is only a small step further to apply the same sceptical strategy to the images and mental acts that accompany our words, for they are all equally susceptible to this. No occurrent act of meaning or intending can give a rule the power to determine our future actions, because there is always the question of how that act is to be interpreted. As a result, the idea that a rule, taken in isolation, can determine all its future applications turns out to be misguided. We ignore the context and think that some isolated act or event can have a determinate meaning regardless of its context. (*Ibid.*, 146).

Obsessed with the idea when doing philosophy that a rule *magically* determines all its future applications, an idea encapsulated, say, in the notion of the *born-Crusoe* as the representative of a wholly *meaning-determinist* outlook (6), we inevitably retreat to a single *instance* of following a rule as a means of escaping from the overtly Platonist implications of a viewpoint that as careful philosophers we wish to avoid. But then the inevitable question arises what one has to do at *this* point, for whatever one does, on *some* interpretation, is in accord with the rule (§ 198). But that sums up the very nature of the *misunderstanding* that

lies at the heart of the *paradox* of rule-following - that a rule is always subject at any particular *point* to various interpretations - one which is central to the realisation that in the course of coming to *this* conclusion 'we gave one interpretation after another; as if each one contented us at least for a moment, until we thought of yet another standing behind it (§ 201). But *understanding* the rule *is* a matter of showing what counts in *practice* as an example of acting either in accordance with the rule or of going against it (§ 201). It is for this reason that there cannot have been only one occasion on which someone followed a rule (§ 199), for the mastery of the technique of following the rule *is* manifested in the varying *contexts* in which one can be shown to be either adhering to it or not. Outwith these contexts and taken in *isolation*, it appears that what one has to do at *this* point in following the rule is to make a leap in the dark; but that once again *is* a consequence of taking the rule out of its day-to-day context.

Stern in fact does not provide a detailed exposition of §§ 197 - 202, though the passage just quoted in which he stresses the importance of *context* is entirely in conformity with them. It is also wholly consistent with the claim that Wittgenstein, far from providing a *theory* of any kind in these sections, is actually issuing a *reminder* that when doing philosophy, it is only too easy to adopt an outlook in which the 'sceptical paradox' surrounding the notion of *following a rule* can assume an importance in our thinking that leads us to forget what Stern refers to as the 'platitudes' issued by one of the participants in his dialogues. However, these platitudes are always combined by Wittgenstein with an analysis of where the wayward philosopher in the act of forgetting them actually goes *wrong*, and for *that* reason are not entirely without any theoretical associations.

In fact, Stern is content here to point out that most commentators have read §§ 134 - 242 rather differently, as passages from which they require to extract and refine a non-Pyrrhonian philosophical theory from his unconventional exposition, and this leads to a discussion of Kripke whose own argument in favour of Wittgenstein as a rule-following sceptic turns on a summary of 'our paradox' in § 201. At this point Stern's overall presentation

of the Kripkean viewpoint is rather sketchy, Kripke's Wittgenstein being said to express the view that whether a person is obeying a rule 'is determined by the public checks on my conformity to the rule that are provided by my linguistic community' (*Ibid.*,154), where this is open to the interpretation that 'what the majority says' is in some way taken to *determine* what it is to follow the rule. In this respect, Marie McGinn by contrast is careful to emphasise that Kripke does not wish his viewpoint to be identified with one that would take the decisions of the community to enter into any criterion that would constitute the nature of what it is to 'follow a rule' (McGinn, *Ibid.*, 79). McGinn's treatment of this and other issues relating to Kripke is actually more detailed than Stern's, although this is not of particular significance because he has already provided a convincing account of what in this context is of central importance to his assessment of Wittgenstein's Pyrrhonian agenda.

Yet at this point Stern goes off at a tangent in order to explain that whilst Kripke's interpretation has had little direct support in the secondary literature, it has acted as the point of departure for discussions between two opposing camps, 'Individualists' and 'Communitarians' - groups whose membership is often roughly aligned respectively in conformity with that of his anti-Pyrrhonian *v* Pyrrhonian factions - without actually mentioning here that there is something rather un - Wittgensteinian about the very idea that Wittgenstein would have seen the adoption of a standpoint on this question as anything but an indication of *philosophical* confusion: when Wittgenstein draws attention to the *fact* of learning a language in a community, this is *not* part of a *philosophical* thesis stating what *must* be so, what *must* underlie the circumstances in which words have meaning, say, but a reminder of the kinds of ordinary, familiar situations which help to draw our eyes away from the idea of Augustine's child for whom the world is *intrinsically* meaningful prior to his being trained into the use of a public language. As McGinn suggests (McGinn, *Ibid.*,65), the fundamental point is that in its *philosophical* guise - a guise it has been shown we need not always adopt in studying Augustine's portrayal - this picture is empty and contributes nothing to our philosophical understanding of what it is to acquire a language.

McGinn actually puts this in terms of Augustine's *account* of language acquisition failing to *explain* how the child has come to acquire this mastery of the techniques manifested in its understanding of what the adult is doing in pointing and in uttering a sound; for this is merely *presupposed* in what he says. Whilst this is undoubtedly central to Wittgenstein's thinking, the very use of this term 'explain' almost inevitably points in the direction of an *empirical* account of what it is to learn a language. This *can* lead to an inherent ambivalence in our understanding of what Wittgenstein is about, for he was certainly *not* in the business of providing any form of explanatory account of this kind. One can detect the same ambivalence in Meredith Williams's proposal that *how* we learn is *constitutive* of what we mean (7), with the consequence that in isolation from a social practice in which the novice becomes master of a technique, no single individual *can* engage in actions that are correct or incorrect. Yet Williams's perceptive treatment turns on converting a *reminder* of how things are *as* a means of diverting our attention from misleading *pictures*, into a *positive* 'communitarian' account in which the content of belief is integral to the technique which in *practice* allows language to be acquired. Certainly, very often Wittgenstein does point to the circumstances in which a language *is* acquired as a reminder to philosophers that when they stress what to them is apparently *intrinsically* meaningful, they are viewing, *e.g.*, the *representational content* of their perceptual experiences in isolation from the background which serves to provide what they are saying in a *philosophical* context with any apparent significance it may have. The question is whether we have the right to read into the texts, the rather more positive kinds of conclusions, highly suggestive and perceptive though they be, at which Williams arrives in her book (*Cf. Zettel* 412).

Having successfully disposed of Kripke, Stern provides an interesting historical account of 'a new sociology of knowledge' as this was understood to be derived during the 1960's and 70's from Wittgenstein's ideas, mentioning David Bloor, and also Peter Winch whose ideas in *On The Idea of a Social Science* are discussed in detail, pointing out finally that Wittgenstein would have repudiated attempts 'to discern a systematic pattern behind the

phenomena' because these kinds of attempts 'go too far in the opposite direction, substituting a mechanistic theory of fictitious causal forces or a finalistic theory of rule-governed action for close observation of what actually goes on in our lives' (*Ibid.*, 168). Arguing that attempts like these fail to recognise that Wittgenstein's Pyrrhonian point is precisely that there can be no philosophical problem about rule-following, no 'gap' between rules and their applications of the kind with which both sceptics and anti-sceptics are occupied, Stern gradually brings his narrative to a close with his reiteration of a point that is central to his understanding of Wittgenstein's methodology: that what seems, to philosophers like Robert Fogelin and Crispin Wright, to be an author not in full control of his material, one oscillating between a Pyrrhonian philosophical method and one endorsing particular theoretical non-Pyrrhonian views, is rather a way of advocating quietism through a form of dialogue in which non-Pyrrhonian participants play the leading roles (*Ibid.*, 170).

Stern's final chapter provides a masterly summary at an appropriate level of the different approaches which have been taken towards Wittgenstein's treatment of a private language, once again refusing to endorse the almost universal tendency amongst commentators to erect a theoretical edifice around Wittgenstein's Pyrrhonian reflections. He begins by asking whether Wittgenstein really holds the so-called 'expressive *theory* of meaning' often attributed to him and based on what he says in § 244, following this by questioning whether Wittgenstein adopted a *theory* to the effect that a claim to knowledge requires evidence that is in principle open to doubt, a claim that for this reason cannot be made about our sensations. For any first person statement about one's sensations cannot be construed as a claim to *knowledge*: sensations are not items about which one could have insufficient evidence. Rather, Wittgenstein ought to be seen as reflecting on a suspicious philosophical use of 'to know', one which motivates a picture of the mind in which the philosopher can have direct, privileged access to his inner states.

Stern regards the traditional approach to these texts, in which Wittgenstein sets out his own theory of language as a means of demolishing familiar philosophical standpoints, as over

hasty and misleading, arguing that his narrator issues a number of far from unequivocal statements none of which need be read as any more than reminders of what we would ordinarily say, as distinct from providing the detailed and sophisticated articulation of definite philosophical standpoints often found in the secondary literature:

However, philosophers have found it extremely attractive to construe this part of the text as providing the materials for a master argument that decisively undermines familiar philosophical theories, such as Cartesian dualism, a foundationalism that starts from inner experience, or the view that the mind depends on a 'language of thought' (*Ibid.*, 174).

Instead, Wittgenstein's principal targets are the trains of thought that lead philosophers into thinking of inner experience as a privileged philosophical point of departure, and since his ultimate aim is to show that the resulting theories make no sense, the relevance of what he is doing for mainstream topics in the philosophy of mind is far from being as clear-cut as many philosophers have supposed. This all sounds very much in conformity with the final outlook of Gordon Baker, but there is, as always, a danger of going too far in the *opposite* direction, in spite of the fact that Stern identifies Wittgenstein as objecting to a highly individual notion of *super-privacy*, the nature of which it is far from certain that we can even fully appreciate:

In effect, Wittgenstein's narrator contends that the defender of a private language must choose between a pair of unacceptable alternatives. Either the concept of privacy involved is one we are already familiar with, in which case it will not support the philosophical use the private linguist wants to make of it; or it is a philosophical super-concept, custom-built to underwrite the philosopher's theory, but sublimely disconnected from the rest of our language....(*Ibid.*, 175 *et seq.*)

That many philosophers' objections to a certain common interpretation of the private language argument, have indeed been based on their failure to appreciate this special concept of

super-privacy, helps to explain why even today (8) philosophers can still treat Wittgenstein as if he were *denying* the sorts of ordinary 'common sense' things we say about our sensations that they take to be transparently true. Generally speaking, these philosophers operate with a quite *ordinary* notion of privacy incorporating the commonplace idea that we regularly *do* - contra Wittgenstein - identify and reidentify our sensations with considerable success. Since these sensations have distinct 'qualitative feels', they serve to provide us with the *representational content* allowing us to put a *name* to them. What these philosophers are saying, therefore, is entirely in accordance with at least one central aspect of what has already been described here as the *Augustinian Picture*.

Stern, on the other hand, adopts a methodology which stresses Wittgenstein's emphasis on the prior context of practices and institutions underlying the use of ostensive definition, so that he inevitably points to the importance of the *stage-setting* that is presupposed if naming is even to make sense (§ 257); and this stress on the *grammar* of pain language leads to an interpretation of the 'argument' that rather downplays any theoretical aspects that may have traditionally been associated with it:

On the reading I am advocating, Wittgenstein's principal point is not that we could not go on to use a super-private definition consistently, nor that one would be unable to tell that one was using it correctly. Instead, it is much simpler: that nothing one could actually do would ever amount to setting up such a language, for the role of training and practice in ostension prevent a 'private linguist' from using a sign to mean anything at all, even once. In other words, the problem is ultimately the logical one highlighted in § 257: the 'stage-setting' that it presupposes would not be in place. (*Ibid.*, 178).

This has to be distinguished from the common form of the argument Stern identifies in which the private linguist really is successful in his initial moves to set up his language. Yet

problems arise further down the road, because when he comes to try to 'name his sensation' a second time round some necessary condition for the use of the name cannot be met. Just exactly what this condition is - e.g., some objective test or criterion of correctness allowing for a decision on the *correct* use of the term - has been, on Stern's assessment, the subject of an extraordinary amount of debate. But as he correctly emphasises, this is in any event a deeply problematic reading, because in presuming that the private linguist manages to establish a meaning in *some* sense for his term first time round, it begs the question why he should not be allowed to properly identify his sensation in the future. Vague references to 'public criteria of correctness' which the private user lacks, so that for him 'whatever seems right is right' fail on Stern's view to show why arguments like these really depend on anything more than a questionable scepticism about memory, or on an inherent presumption that the community has access to resources that the private user question-beggingly lacks.

But whilst Stern does justifiably stress the strictly methodological 'stage-setting' aspect of Wittgenstein's treatment of private language in § 257, what he does not mention is the all-important § 288, where the reference to cutting out human behaviour as the expression of sensation leads to the suggestion that one might *legitimately* begin to doubt afresh. This points to a transformation that, far from indicating the move from a sensation that *in fact* has some behavioural expression to one that does not, alters the entire landscape, for it is intended to introduce Wittgenstein's extreme notion of *super-privacy*. The prime characteristic of this form of privacy is precisely that, as distinct from our *ordinary* notion of privacy in which first person sensation ascriptions are *criterionless* - the feature that distinguishes ordinary sensations from private *objects* - these super-private sensations require their own *individual* criteria of identity.

It is a significant feature of the concept of a *sensation* used by 20th century philosophers of a generally empiricist persuasion, that it hovers between two paradigms, *one* which sees sensation-talk as criterionless, the feature that (misrepresented) provides direct access to *certain* knowledge, which acts as a secure foundation for talk of an objective world; and *another* which

treats sensations as private *objects* each with their own *individual* criteria of identity. But this feature incorporates the possibility of *misidentification*. Yet the possibility of misidentification, is precisely the feature in terms of which Wittgenstein *defines* the private object. But this feature guarantees that this model can have *no* application to anything that we could even understand to be sensation-talk. Consequently, any attempt to identify a private sensation in terms of its possessing *individual* criteria of identity can make no sense, so that ‘whatever is going to seem right to me is right. And that only means that here we can’t talk about “right” ’ (§ 258).

The very fact that Wittgenstein’s text does point in these two different directions, firstly towards a methodological ‘stage-setting’ *reminder*-type treatment of *ordinary* sensations, drawing our eyes away from the inevitable temptation to see them as self-intimating, direct providers of meaning, independently of a *public* language, yet also towards an extraordinary view in the passages repudiating the idea of a *private* language, of super-private sensations as private objects so *defined* that they cannot meet the criteria allowing them to conform to our understanding of what a sensation *is*, is yet a further reflection of Wittgenstein’s sheer fertility of imagination.

Marie McGinn’s treatment lays great stress on the *grammar* of sensation language, and so agrees with Stern that a proper appreciation of this grammar means that we have to look at the overall context in which our sensation language is used, ‘that we cannot derive an idea of what a given psychological state is simply through introspection.’ (McGinn, *Ibid.*, 130). This overtly methodological approach, eschewing any attempt to find a decisive ‘argument’ in the relevant passages, suggests that the philosopher’s neglect of the stage-setting required, is what leads to his temptation to see our sensations in an ‘Augustinian’ way *as* intrinsically meaningful, a way allowing us to attach a *word* to them, independently of the acquisition of a public language (9).

This traditional approach adopted by philosophers in which they view our sensation language in isolation from the background against which *in fact* our sensation terms acquire meaning, is exactly what Wittgenstein’s reminders are intended to question, by asking philosophers what they think they are doing when they neglect the surroundings in which our

terms acquire meaning. It is a characteristic feature of Stern's interpretation of Wittgenstein's achievement in §§ 243 - 268 that it not only abandons traditional *reductio* arguments, but that it sees his relationship to his philosophical predecessors as one that is far more subtle and wide-ranging than could be gleaned from any master argument providing a decisive 'refutation' of the Cartesian dualism and empiricist foundationalism to which Stern refers in the final chapter of this highly rewarding and welcome addition to the secondary literature.

ENDNOTES

- (1) Stanley Cavell: 'Notes and Afterthoughts on the Opening of Wittgenstein's *Investigations*' *The Cambridge Companion to Wittgenstein* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) ,261.
- (2) Rupert Read and Phil Hutchinson: 'Whose Wittgenstein?' Review in *Philosophy*, 80, July 2005.
- (3) Stephen Mullhall: *Inheritance and Originality Wittgenstein, Heidegger, Keiekegaard* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 43.
- (4) Hans Johann Glock: *A Wittgenstein Dictionary* (Oxford: Blackwell Pub., 1996), 41.
- (5) Stephen Mulhall: *Wittgenstein's Private Language Grammar, Nonsense and Imagination in Philosophical Investigations §§ 243-315* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) 31 *et seq.*
- (6) As presented in Martin Kusch: *A Sceptical Guide to Meaning and Rules Defending Kripke's Wittgenstein* (Chesham, Acumen, 2006).
- (7) Meredith Williams: *Wittgenstein, Mind and Meaning: Towards a Social Conception of Mind* (London: Routledge, 1999), Chapter 7.
- (8) A recent example can be found in Bede Rundle's 'The Private Language Argument' in *Wittgenstein and Analytic Philosophy Essays for P.M.S. Hacker* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 133.
- (9) Scott Soames: *Philosophical Analysis in The Twentieth Century, Volume 2, The Age of Meaning* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2003) 44 *et seq.*

As do most philosophers, Derek McDougall fondly remembers the publication of his very first paper. This was in MIND in 1972. He has, however, continued to worry whether Gilbert Ryle's comment that "the matter is stated well and almost interestingly" referred more to the quality of its treatment rather than to Ryle's aversion to the nature of its subject (religious belief). Other papers have appeared in organs including PHILOSOPHY AND PHENOMENOLOGICAL RESEARCH and PHILOSOPHIA. His latest, on Wittgenstein, appears in the 2008 edition of JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHICAL RESEARCH, with a further (forthcoming) in PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATIONS.

